

# Face to Face with European Cinema

## Interview with Kinga Plicht, Gdynia Film Centre by Birgit Heidsiek

A taste of European Cinema.

Young audiences are getting a chance to experience European films in their proper cultural context. The Collaborate to Innovate project “Face to Face with European Cinema” gives school children a taste of a country’s language, music, food, and traditions. Kinga Plicht from the Gdynia Film Centre describes the initiative.

### **What inspired you to develop this project?**

Young people don’t often know what European cinema means because they don’t understand the language and culture of other countries. That’s why we want to do more than just show movies. We want to promote European films to young audiences by also introducing them to the country’s music and food, so they can see the films in their proper cultural context.

### **How are the young viewers selected?**

We invite about 50-60 school children, 15 years of age and older, from schools in Poland. We choose a different high school each time. At our first event, we showed the animated feature film *Chłopi (The Peasants)*, which is Poland’s 2024 Oscar contender. We asked students to produce a movie for school children in other countries that would both promote this film and feature Polish culture. The teenagers were given six months to prepare a presentation for the contest, which will be conducted during the final session in spring 2024. A jury will review the submissions and select a winner. The film will be presented in Spain and Germany in order to promote Polish cinema to local school children. The winner of the contest will be invited, along with the winner’s family, on a two-day



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all-expense-paid trip to Łódź, a UNESCO Creative City.

### **How is the programme designed?**

We hold six events in our cinema in Gdynia and one in the Charlie Cinema in Łódź. We prepare the events in collaboration with our partners, arthouse cinemas from UNESCO Creative Cities Potsdam, Valladolid, Terrassa and Łódź. We start with French Day; in December we have Italian Day; and in January our colleagues from the Thalia Cinema in Potsdam will come to Gdynia to give a presentation for German Day. In February, we will show a Scandinavian film. For Spanish Day in March, we will invite our partner cinemas from Valladolid and Terrassa. They will present various traditions because Spain

and Catalonia have different cultures. We will also feature a Czech movie in April. Some of the presentations will be prepared in collaboration with the relevant local embassy.

### **What do young audiences experience at these events?**

Each event starts with a presentation that delivers insights into the country and its culture. This is followed by the film. After the screening, there is a talk hosted by a university psychologist who speaks with the students not only about the culture and the film, but also about their experiences and feelings. For French Day, we prepare French food, perform French music, and show the musical film *Les Misérables* by Ladji Ly. We also invite a troupe



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from a French musical theatre who perform songs from their current show. Moreover, we collaborate with the French Institute in Gdynia.

**What impact will these events have on young audiences?**

When we showed the Polish film, the students were delighted to participate in such an engaging project. Young audiences get the opportunity to taste food and hear music from other countries. We hope that they take photos, make videos, and share their impressions on social media. That would be a great way to promote European cinema.

**Can this concept be adapted by exhibitors in other countries?**

We're getting a lot of interest from different countries. We look forward to presenting our project and sharing our experience at the next Europa Cinemas conference. And, of course, any exhibitor can check out our English-language website. The idea is to bring this project to different European cinemas.



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**Partner cinemas:**

- Gdynia Film Centre**, Gdynia, Poland (Coordinator)
- Charlie Cinema**, Lodz, Poland
- Thalia Cinema**, Potsdam, Germany
- Cinema Catalunya**, Terrassa, Spain
- Cinema Casablanca**, Valladolid, Spain
- Cinema Broadway**, Valladolid, Spain
- Cinema Manhattan**, Valladolid